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Deleuze and Continuum (OR Why you should read Mechanomics)

Analysis

Hello, this is an abridged account of the journey of continuum in Deleuze's philosophy and beyond where my attempt is to illustrate the importance of the "Mechanomics" from Fanged Noumena in my opinion completing the project which Deleuze set out on when it comes to effectively unleashing the continuous from the discrete and the negative. Enjoy

In Difference and Repetition Deleuze attempts to immanentize Bergson's notion of continuum. It is important to note that when I say "Bergson" I'm talking about Deleuze's accounting of his philosophy, which may or may not be accurate to the true Bergson. Bergson's metaphorical diagram of the cone is in my opinion really well served by the example of the colour wheel. The Colour Wheel is a continuous display of the spectrum of colours, which we can artificially separate by drawing lines to separate distinct colours like blue and purple or red and orange.

The smaller the size of the Colour wheel the more easier it is to draw a clear line of separation between the colours, and it becomes harder as the wheel gets larger and when we draw a line the each side of the line looks as if it is more or less the same colour.

Bergson's Cone can be understood as taking an infinite amount of differently sized colour wheels and stacking them one on top of another in order of scale, the largest at the bottom and the smallest on the top. The idea is that each level contains the exact same spectrum of colours but at a different level of contraction or condensation. On the very tippy top the colour wheel approaches condensation into a dot, infinitesimally approaching an infinity of contraction, and the lowest largest levels are approaching zero contraction, maximum relaxation. There are two infinitely subdivisible infinities at play the Color wheel itself which has a full infinitely differentiated spectrum of colour on it, and the infinite ordering of the different sizes of color wheels different in their degrees of contraction, intuition then, apprehends the absolute through an intersection of these two levels. Reality is then comprehended in terms of tendencies, the dot is simply the idealised point representing the limit corresponding to present Experience, the immediate apprehension of the full spectrum of difference, and the less contracted levels below corresponding to a more or less recent Memory. Both Memory and Experience contain in themselves the full spectrum of difference at different levels of contraction. To return to the concrete metaphor of the color wheel, if we were to cut a line into the cone from the top like cutting a cake, the cut would bisect the entire spectrum of difference at the very top, but would bisect only portions of it as we descend down the layers. And importantly on the levels closer to the top the line cut into the color wheel would separate clear and distinct colours like blue and purple, but as descend further the line would come to cut through a less and less distinct two colours relative to the ones further to the top. On the levels approaching zero contraction the line would essentially just be a line cutting through the same colour. It's important to understand that the difference in the way in which the line cuts through the colour wheel is only relative if we took each color wheel in isolation the line would cut the same way, but their arrangement in an ordering allows for us to extract a difference between the two levels.

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relate the utmost top level of approaching full condensation, to the lowest levels approaching zero condensation, in the color wheel example, let's say that zero we draw the line from the top dot of the cone down the the place of the bottom of the cone where it is situated on the colour blue, we then project this relation of a unity of colour blue onto each of the other levels of the colour code, and we will be able to find a discrete blue in each of them, admittedly through subordinating the continuum to a discrete cutting up process. The rest of the Colours are then understood Negatively as not the other one, which is related to the lowest level of the cone where that colour is the only thing the top level of experience is related to. Extensity, the opposition to the continuum of duration is found here.

The obvious objection to the example of the Color Wheel is the clear issue of metaphor in philosophical thought in general, the relative difference between the two degrees of contraction is fully reduced to a discrete extended limitation of the human eye. However I believe this is specifically where Deleuze finds the issue with Bergson, the metaphor of the cone by itself is problematic because it relies on a subjectivity to be comprehended, that of a discreet human subjectivity. By saying "The Cone is just a metaphor" there is an appeal to preformal irrational insight into the absolute that is simply impossible to access in a strict rigorous way. This obviously poses a problem for Deleuze who from the outset wants to understand Intuition as philosophical method and not merely a romantic irrational fancy. Much like the issues of Plato's Cave allegory, the recourse to metaphor according to Deleuze reveals a vulnerability of the philosophical theory to external capture by the forces of the negative that the Philosopher was attempting to avoid. In both cases the Metaphor betrays them, in Bergson's sense in particular the necessity of the extended subject position to capture the intersection of the two continuous multiplicities ends up subordinating continuum to a subjective difference. A metaphor is simply not good enough.

Deleuze's theory of intensive quantity was the attempt or what I'd retrospectively now claim to be the promising first draft of rising above this problem. Deleuze attempts to mobilize Extensity itself towards production of continuum. While with Bergson Extensity existed as merely the outskirts of Duration, for Deleuze the extensive is present and accompanies any kind of effective invocation of continua, while the Bergsonian field of non-extended Virtual multiplicity is still a part of Deleuze's system it is only so as a regulative ideal in the Kantian sense, we orient ourselves according to it but there could be no immanent intergration of these Ideas into a development of thought, this is because there needs to be a way to effectively resolve the relativity of the Virtual, and the component of Intensive quantity is this necessary component Deleuze saw as missing from Bergson.

An Intensive quantity cannot be compared to the relative continuum of the Color Wheel. No color on the Color Wheel possesses an absolute more or less, but rather only a more or less of a particular color. A colour can be more or less purple or blue, less blue is more purple and vice versa. With Intensive quantities it is different, they are continuous in that they do not resolve into discrete parts and can be infinitely divided but they are a true quantity that deviates from an absolute zero, an intensive difference is a difference from zero in a way that a difference of Color is not. Intensity accompanies all extensive magnitudes, temperature accompanies heat, density accompanies volume, speed accompanies distance. This is due to the fact that intensive quantities are derived from dividing mathematically two extensive quantities, speed is derived from the division of distance and time (time in this instance being merely the distance crossed by a clock arrow so it is in a sense a division of two different distances) density is derived from the division of mass and volume, and temperature derives from mass and heat. In this way Intensity is both a fully abstract quantity without any substantial correlate to its components, an Intensity does not dissolve into smaller intensities comprising it, while also being Backed by extensities along the way as each increase in intensity has a correlate of increase in extensive support. The theme of the intersection of two continua returns again, now in the form of Deleuze's intensive ontology, the difference between a lesser and a higher intensity testifies to a leap across an infinitesimal abyss, a reaching of a singularity. Since each Intensity is comprised of its

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small has been crossed. Each intensity then comprises an infinite amount of these leaps, these singularities being reached.

While Deleuze's Intensities are far superior to Bergson's metaphors since they are real empirically observable phenomena, their vulnerability to the negative remains in the form of Logicisation. The reliance on an archaic understanding of calculus which is purposefully defective from the mainstream mathematical canon dooms Deleuze's intensities to a dismissal from the side of the axiomatization of arithmetic. While Deleuze's intensities might work from a pre set theory barbaric understanding of infinitesimals they are completely annihilated by modern Logicisation of numbers through sets. By defining clusters of number by Logical formula, the rationals or irrationals cease to be effectively beyond the Negative, since they are ultimately anticipated or defined by a linguistically conditioned logical configuration dependant upon arbitrary axiomatic grounds. Deleuze was well aware of this, even when he wrote *Difference and Repetition* however he hardly attempted a counter attack. He simply renounced the logicisation of arithmetic, but without the ability to effectively, or immanently critique this process his usage of intensive quantity remained tacitly tethered to a Transcendent axiomatic, facilitated by the Signifying distribution of negative difference.

Logic in its modern formalistic sense, concerns itself with writing. It possesses a vocabulary of signifying signs or symbols differentiated by nothing but a transcendent lacking signifier, aka they're difference is purely negative, it possesses a set of rules for what makes a well formed sentence using these signs aka only certain sentences are valid, as in only they can be translatable, as well as binary relations between the symbols which determines what can be deduced from one string into another, finally the entire logical system bases itself on axioms, certain arbitrarily selected beginnings, well formed sentences taken to be true dogmatically. It is difficult to overstate to what extent the couple of Signifier and Axiom, transcendence and dogma, destroys the hopes of rigorous immanent critique, but it is equally impossible to overstate the intensity of its undoing by the introduction of Godel coding or transcendental arithmetic. In the process of proving the impossibility of constructing a Logical system capable of proving its own completeness, aka being able to prove that all its well formed strings are either true or false, Godel gave Transcendental philosophy the perfect tool to renumberize their critique. Godel coding, the process of encoding each symbol in the vocabulary of a Logic System by a string of number, and displacing rules of inference by arithmetical operations, where "this symbol next to this symbol becomes this symbol" translates to "this number is multiplied by that number", immediately immanentizes logic forever. The first thing to note would be that it removes any notion of the necessity of dogma. Axioms are the first to die, since any number taken to be the axiomatic starting point will no longer need to be accepted as dogmatically true, rather it has an infinite number of ways to be deduced, this trait of transcendental arithmetic allows for smooth transition from one logical system to another, the arithmetical operations you're doing might, in the moment be emulating one Logical system (in fact it will be emulating at least several), while being able to switch gears and proceed emulating another, the switch of rules of inference does not matter since you are only doing arithmetic after all, Axioms are proven to be unnecessary, a simple convention, for easier linguistic comprehension of the arithmetical work of logic.

The essay *Mechanomics* by Nick Land mobilizes the Transcendental arithmetic motor in a beautiful way to resuscitate a now purely machinic continuum. It is Deleuzian Intensity now powered by a hopelessly numerized logic, you might remember that the Logicisation of Number was the momentary undoing of Deleuzian attempts to reffectuate continuum through the infinitely small. It is then unsurprising that the first thing to do once the roles are reversed, once number has finally subsumed logic in itself entirely, that we attempt to give to the infinitely small its positive continuum back. Land achieves this by marrying Godel arithmetic to an older proof by Cantor of the uncountability of real number. The Diagonal argument, brings to us again the case of the intersection of two infinities but this time they are not continuous, the final appeal to continuum has fittingly dispensed with any need

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cardinality. Cantor proves, through a diagonal demonstration, the details of which can be read in Mechanisms but also just like on Wikipedia, that the real numbers cannot be counted or successfully mapped onto the natural number line, there is thus a surplus in relation to the natural numbers. This is not a big deal to Logic, we simply say that the real numbers have a higher cardinality and call it a day, they can still be enumerated just by a set larger than that of natural numbers which Logic can easily evoke since it defines these sets. But wait.

If all Logic can be effectively done by the natural numbers, as in all that logic is was and can be is already encoded actually by the natural numbers, and we can prove that there is a surplus in relation to natural numbers. Here is where the Signifier dies for good. It might have died already but here it's not only dead but Mega dead. Even if we grant to the signifier that Numbers are differentiated merely negatively as in 1 does not mean 2 and 2 does not mean 3, the introduction of a positive surplus that which cannot in principle be signified since it cannot be enumerated completely shatters any hope of a transcendent lacking signifier. To paraphrase D&G, if the consciousness is lacking anything it is that surplus which cannot be captured by consciousness, the unequal in itself situated between the natural numbers. The unequal rumbling in intensity.

So yeah we did it it's kind of nice woo *confetti*

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**apophasisred** • 1y ago

There is so much here that I cannot interact with it in a productive manner. That inability may be my fault even though I have some familiarity with much of this material. I find it useful, for me anyway, to have a target quotation upon which to focus in order to make the larger frames palpable. So I will ask a question that may be related or not: I do not even know.

The logic and concept of number here seems to be normative: accepted by the academic departments charged with these fields. I wonder if stoic logic and attitude toward number would go elsewhere.

Their five axiomatic schema were for inference and not truth. In them, the steps and functions were not organized by pure numerals but ordinals. Peirce who was precocious in the recognition of differential power of the Stoics over the Aristotelian tradition - I think - borrowed this in his seminal concern with 1stness, 2ndness and thirdness. This switch perhaps implies a more intensive modality than, say, the aleph null of the so-called natural numbers.

What then might intensive "continuity" be since its operational modality is not that of the number line but rather the ongoing heterogenetic disparation of the univocal without metric?



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**apophasisred** • 1y ago

Well, I am not sure which of the elements you wish to address. Might begin with Benson Mates, The Stoics.

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**demontune** OP • 1y ago

I mean specifically the idea of the ordinal number in stoic logic

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**apophasisred** • 1y ago

Lukaciewicz (sp?)

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**thenonallgod** • 1y ago

I would prefer not to be bought into this logic of sense

-1 Reply ...

**3corneredvoid** • 1y ago

"While Deleuze's intensities might work from a pre set theory barbaric understanding of infinitesimals they are completely annihilated by modern Logicisation of numbers through sets. By defining clusters of number by Logical formula, the rationals or irrationals cease to be effectively beyond the Negative, since they are ultimately anticipated or defined by a linguistically conditioned logical configuration dependant upon arbitrary axiomatic grounds."

Deleuze didn't elide the latter grounding of calculus in axioms out of fear of some capture of the negative. He ends up mentioning it later, quite pointedly. When he writes on the genesis of calculus it's to demonstrate "logicisation" is subsequent to the creation of concepts—intuition generates what reason may later rationalise.

The aversion to metaphor isn't because metaphor threatens to bring becoming as such under the domination of identity, but because metaphors are a matter of recognition, and recognition by definition does not think, it rethinks.

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**demontune** OP • 1y ago

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immanent critique of a negative based Philosophy, it is meant to subvert it from within without appeal to a transcendent access to reality not mediated by extensity. Intensity has to be understood as primary in relation to the negative but if intensity has been entirely explained by the negative of an axiomatized arithmetic then it is removed if it's power to effectively do the job of immanent critique.



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**3corneredvoid** • 1y ago • Edited 1y ago

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I hope I see what you're driving at, but I still don't agree. The key is not how the use of familiar concepts such as temperature and density to characterise the concept of intensity are later explained by any means—all of which are not adequate to the explanation of intensity in full—but how this concept of intensity itself pushes through in various guises, such as that of Leibniz's infinitesimals. This pushing through into intuition occurred in history prior to any given axiomatisation. Famously it occurred apart from any individual subject (considering the contention over which of Newton and Leibniz should be credited with the "invention" of calculus).

I think Deleuze chooses calculus to talk with a deliberate roughness around intensity *because* calculus is concerned with flux and integration, *because* it was mature and widespread in its uses prior to its axiomatisation (unlike say geometry), *because* it was "invented" by a multiple as if crystallising from history.

The project to axiomatise mathematics (less than becoming as such) also failed, due to the limits of the Gödel-coding you reference. Likewise the real numbers have a cardinality, but they are not enumerable, not even by some set properly larger than the naturals as you hint.



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